

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 MCT-01 IO-13 EB-07 TRSE-00
COME-00 /091 W

-----096088 180810Z /20

R 160915Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9692
INFO AMEMBASSY BISSAU
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
AMEMBASSY LISBON
AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIBREVILLE 1818

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, TP
SUBJ: POLITICAL SITUATION IN SAO TOME

REF: LIBREVILLE 1739

SUMMARY: VISIT TO SAO TOME CONFIRMS THAT ALLEGED COUP
ATTEMPT REPORTED REFTEL WAS BASICALLY NON-EVENT
PUBLICIZED BY GSTP FOR ITS OWN INTERNAL PURPOSES.
ISLANDS CALM, SITUATION APPARENTLY STABLE, AND US
ASSISTANCE STILL WELCOME DESPITE REVOLUTIONARY
RHETORIC. END SUMMARY.

1. VISIT TO SAO TOME JULY 12-13 FOR SECOND
ANNIVERSARY INDEPENDENCE CELEBRATIONS PROVIDED
OPPORTUNITY TO TEST POLITICAL TEMPERATURE IN WAKE
OF ALLEGED COUP ATTEMPT ANNOUNCED PREVIOUS WEEK
BY GSTP PRESIDENT DA COSTA (REFTEL).

2. ACCORDING TO PORTUGUESE AND FRENCH REPRESENTATIVES
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IN SAO TOME (ONLY RESIDENT WESTERN DIPLOMATS), SOLE
EVIDENCE OF ALLEGED COUP THUS FAR PRODUCED HAS BEEN
ARREST OF FIVE ILL-ASSORTED MALCONTENTS,
INCLUDING WOULD-BE "SEPARATIST" FROM PRINCIPE, AND
INTERROGATION OF ONE PORTUGUESE NATIONAL WHO WAS
LATER RELEASED. TO BEST OF THEIR KNOWLEDGE, THOSE
ARRESTED WERE GUILTY OF NOTHING MORE THAN TALKING

AGAINST GSTP AND TRYING TO ORGANIZE CLANDESTINE MEETINGS, EVIDENTLY WITHOUT NOTABLE SUCCESS, AND HAVE PROBABLY BEEN UNDER SURVEILLANCE FOR SEVERAL MONTHS.

3. RESIDENT DIPLOMATS DO NOT BELIEVE SUPPOSED PLOTTERS REPRESENTED ANY THREAT TO GSTP, AND BELIEVE THAT ARRESTS WERE DESIGNED TO SERVE GSTP POLITICAL PURPOSES RATHER THAN TO PROTECT MEMBERS OF GOVERNMENT FROM ANY REAL MENACE. FOR ONE THING, COUP ALLEGATIONS PROVIDED DA COSTA WITH EXCELLENT EXCUSE FOR NOT ATTENDING OAU SUMMIT, WHERE HE WOULD HAVE BEEN ONLY LUSOPHONE CHIEF OF STATE PRESENT AT MODERATE-DOMINATED CONCLAVE. BEYOND THIS, LOCAL OBSERVERS FEEL COUP STORY PROVIDES TOOL BOTH FOR EXHORTING POPULATION TO GREATER EFFORT AND FOR STRENGTHENING ALREADY-GROWING PERSONAL POWER OF DA COSTA HIMSELF. INDEED, INDEPENDENCE DAY BANNERS AND CHANTS WERE HEAVILY LADEN WITH PRAISE OF PRESIDENT, WHO WAS ONLY MEMBER OF GSTP SO NAMED ON INDIVIDUAL BASIS.

4. DA COSTA'S OWN SPEECH TO POPULAR RALLY LENDS SUPPORT TO THESIS THAT ALLEGED COUP WAS NOT CONFIDENTIAL

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SERIOUS AFFAIR. PRESIDENT MADE ONLY PASSING REFERENCE TO COUP PLOT AND INCLUDED FEWER DETAILS THAN HAD BEEN OFFERED IN RADIO ADDRESS REPORTED REFTEL. HE DID ADD THAT COUP, OBJECTIVE OF WHICH WAS TO "DESTABILIZE" GSTP, WAS TO HAVE INCLUDED "PHYSICAL VIOLENCE" AGAINST MEMBERS OF GOVERNMENT, BUT DROPPED ENTIRE SUBJECT AFTER BRIEF MENTION. MAIN THEME OF SPEECH, AS IN PREVIOUS YEAR, WAS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND NEED FOR INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY, AND THIS PRAGMATIC MESSAGE CAME CLEARLY THROUGH REVOLUTIONARY RHETORIC (OF "DOWN WITH IMPERIALISM" VARIETY) WHICH PREDOMINATED IN MASS CHANGS AND REMARKS BY WARM-UP SPEAKERS.

5. FURTHER INDICATION THAT PRAGMATISM STILL PREDOMINANT DESPITE REGIME'S IDEOLOGICAL LEANINGS AND CLOSE TIES TO COMMUNIST STATES CAME IN PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS WITH PRESIDENT, PRIME MINISTER, AND OTHER MEMBERS OF GSTP, ALL OF WHOM URGED PROMPT ACTION ON PROPOSED AID AGREEMENT FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT. THEY MADE CLEAR THAT GSTP WISHES KEEP ALL ITS OPTIONS OPEN IN ECONOMIC FIELD

AND TO WORK WITH ALL COMERS, DEFINITELY INCLUDING
USG.

6. ONE SIDELIGHT OF INDEPENDENCE CEREMONIES WAS
SHARP CHILL IN RELATIONS BETWEEN GSTP AND ITS
GABONESE NEIGHBORS, WITH GOG OSTENTATIIOUSLY ABSENT
FROM CELEBRATIONS AND AIR GABON SERVICE BETWEEN
LIBREVILLE AND SAO TOME SUDDENLY SUSPENDED WEEKEND
BEFORE ANNIVERSARY. WHILE GABONESE INSIST AIR
GABON DECISION BASED STRICTLY ON COMMERCIAL GROUNDS
THAT ROUTE LOST MONEY, GSTP IS CONVINCED (PROBABLY
WITH GOOD REASON) THAT HALT IN FLIGHTS WAS ORDERED
BY BONGO BECAUSE OF HIS PIQUE OVER FAILURE OF
DA COSTA TO ATTEND OAU SUMMIT (ESPECIALL AFTER GOG
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SENT SPECIAL PLANE TO GET HIM AT HIS REQUEST).STEIGMAN

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NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
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Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
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